

AGENDA ITEM #

July 12, 2002

To: Delta Protection Commission

From: Margit Aramburu, Executive Director

Subject: Response to Commission Regarding Flooding of Islands within
Yolo Bypass
(For Commission Information Only)

BACKGROUND:

At the March and May meetings, Commissioners asked for information about issues associated with flooding of islands within the Yolo Bypass.

- Prospect Island (1,228 acres): There is an approved project which will reintroduce tidal action to Prospect Island. That Island is located east of the current floodwater flow area, although it was part of the original Yolo Bypass and is subject to a flood easement held by the State. The site was purchased by the Bureau of Reclamation in 1995.
- Little Holland Tract (1,640 acres): The levees on Little Holland Tract flood in the mid-1980's. The land changed hands, and the new owners started to rebuild the levees without Corps permits. The work was stopped as permits were sought. Eventually, permits were denied. In 1999, the Army Corps purchased the Tract.
- Liberty Island (4,760 acres): Liberty Island was purchased with CALFED funds in 1999. The funds were originally granted to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and were slated for inclusion in the proposed North Delta National Wildlife Refuge. Due to delays in adopting a boundary for the proposed Refuge, the funds were transferred to Trust for Public Lands who currently holds title to the site. The levees have not been maintained, and most of the Island has been underwater since shortly after the purchase.

RESPONSE BY RECLAMATION BOARD STAFF:

The Reclamation Board oversees the Yolo Bypass to ensure the capacity of the Federal Flood Control Project. Issues of concern are: growth of substantial riparian vegetation that could impact carrying capacity of the Yolo Bypass; height of levees to ensure floodwater can pass through the Bypass, or possible stress of the Project levees.

If any of these situations were observed, the Reclamation Board would require the landowner to prepare an analysis of the impacts to the Federal Flood Control Project and an evaluation of proposed alternative measures to mitigate the impacts.

The Reclamation Board staff has visited Liberty Island and at this time has not observed any evidence of vegetation growth, impacts to the flood capacity of the Yolo Bypass, or levee deterioration that would necessitate preparation of a study by the landowners.

The Reclamation Board has requested funding (\$635,000) from CALFED to model changes in the Yolo Bypass that could impact its floodwater carrying capacity. CALFED has indicated they will consider funding the proposed project as a directed action; that means the application can be modified this summer to address concerns and/or criticisms raised by CALFED staff.